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The Patna School of Painting

(19th Century)

BY

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THE PATNA SCHOOL OF PAINTING (19TH CENTURY).

By P.C. Manuk.
President, Managing Committee, Patna Museum

The last of the important painters of the Patna School is still alive in the person of Professor Ishwari Prasad, late Vice-Principal and Professor of Fine Arts and Indian paintings at the School of Art, Calcutta, now in enjoyment of a well-earned pension (*Plate 1*). His hand has not lost its skill, as will be apparent from his last original work now happily in the writer's Collection : a charming study of a seated young woman with attractive and intriguing face, with her forefinger to chin as if in contemplation of events to come, peering into the future with expressive eyes. It was an inspiration after this Great War II broke out, and the artist styles it "India contemplates the War." The lady is painted in soft colours, made by the artist himself, with discreet touches of gold, while by way of contrast a vivid carmine has been used to depict the curtain across the Saracenic arch in the top background: altogether a delicate composition attractive in its very simplicity (*Plate 2*). Perhaps she visualises India as a free country within the great British Commonwealth of Nations, a freedom won by the gallant deeds of her sons on many a far flung battle front. The Masters of the Kangra School, whose technique is not very dissimilar, never painted a

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more dainty little lady typifying India through her womanhood.

When the writer had the good fortune to acquire this little gem recently, it struck him that it would be as well to collect from the Professor all the information available of the history of himself and his forbears who founded what is known to collectors of and writers on Indian pictorial Art as the Patna School, a School which the writer may fairly lay claim to have made known some years ago when he first entered the field of Indian pictorial Art as a collector. Most of the information brought together and published here in some detail has been gathered from Professor Ishwari Prasad, some from other sources, and the writer has been encouraged by Dr. A. Banerjt-Sastri to contribute this article to the B. O. R. S. Magazine, obviously the most appropriate medium through which the Patna School of Artists should be perpetuated.

Ishwari Prasad inherits his artistic gifts from his mother, the lady Sona Bai, an artist herself. He was born in the house of his maternal grandfather in 1871 in Lodikatra, a quarter of Patna City. His father, Fakir Chand by name, (not to be confused with another ancestor of the same name from the distaff side to be mentioned presently) was a Supervisor in a Military Department and his paternal grandfather was a Subedar Bahadur in the Sappers of the East India Company. This family hailed from the Allahabad district, but neither of these two gentlemen was an artist. To trace the artistic strain in the family, we have therefore to

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work through the maternal grandfather Babu Shiva Lal also known as Shiva Lal Saheb, "Shahi Musavvir" or Imperial Artist. This designation attached to his name indicates his descent from one or more of the Court Painters of the Grand Moguls. Shiva Lal's family originally hailed from Delhi which was the scene of their artistic activities through the reigns of Akbar, Jahangir and Shahjehan. The earliest artist forbear whose name is remembered in the family tradition is Manohar, a famous Court painter under Akbar and also mentioned in the Memoirs of the Emperor Jahangir[1].

In the reign of the Emperor Aurangzebe (1658—1707) who encouraged no kind of pictorial Art except paintings commemorating his own military exploits (there are two such examples in the writer's Collection) or depicting his acts of piety (such as reading the Koran in mosques) and who rather more than discouraged all Hindu Art and Hindu artists, the descendants of Manohar migrated *en bloc* to Murshidabad, where reigned at that time a Viceroy of Bengal more enlightened and liberal minded than his Imperial Master at Delhi. Dhani Ram was the name of Ishwari Prasad's artist ancestor at that time. As an authentic portrait of Dhani Ram is available and as portraits of artists of the Mogul period are extremely rare, it may be of interest to reproduce this portrait even though it be a rough sketch (*Plate 3*). He and his descendants

1. For a fine example reproduced in colour of Manohar's work *see* Plate xxxi, *Indian Painting under the Moguls* by Percy Brown, 1924.

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and a small coterie of artists from Delhi established themselves in the village of Balu Chak on the Ganges hard by Murshidabad and for sometime enjoyed the patronage of the Nawabs of Murshidabad and other local gentry, practising their art in peace. A painting of a Begum with a hookha seated on the river bank has survived from those days and is reproduced in *Plate 4*, not because of any intrinsic merit but because it depicts the Ganges with Murshidabad on the right farther bank and the village of Balu Chak at the bend of the river on the opposite bank. This 'Chak' has since disappeared, and the name of the artist is not known. A further reason for reproducing this painting is that it is the only authentic example by one of the immigrant artists working at Murshidabad and illustrates how the Delhi technique had already been shed. Moreover it foreshadows faintly, perhaps, the more careful and pleasing technique of the Patna School established by these Murshidabad artists later on.

Then came another change in the family's fortune, necessitating another migration. In 1757 there succeeded to the Bengal Nizamat Nawab Mir Jaffar. He conferred on his son Miran *alias* Mohamed Sadiq Khan the title of Nasir-ul-Mulk, Ala-u-Dowlah and also the Revenue stewardship of the three Provinces. This Miran though brave and able was vicious and cruel, and it is said that his oppression drove our Hindu artists to migrate once more and this time the trek was to Patna. The name of Ishwari's ancestor who came to

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Patna is untraceable. With them came a number of artist castemen and pupils whose names are likewise unremembered and this group of emigres laid the foundation of the Patna School of Painting. If the information is correct that the exodus was due to Miran's conduct—and there is no reason to doubt the tradition—then it must have taken place very shortly before 1760, as Miran was struck by lightning and killed in that year[1].

Mr. Percy Brown states that with the disintegration of the Mogul Empire towards the end of the 18th Century, Mogul artists were beginning to be scattered all over the peninsula; and that one group of Hindu artists wandered East to Patna in Bihar there to form a local style or qalam which was of some repute in the beginning of the 19th Century[2]. It will be seen that our investigations on the spot bear out approximately the date of the migration to Patna, but that migration was not direct from Delhi ; there was an intermediate stage at Murshidabad, at any rate so far as the locally best known artists of the Patna School are concerned. There is unfortunately however no definite evidence apart from tradition

1 A History of Murshidabad District by Major J. H. T. Walsh, 1902 p. 151. Miran was also appointed Deputy of the Viceroy his father (Translation of Maharaja Kalyan Singh's Khulasat-ut-Tewarikh by Khan Bahadur Sarfaraz Hussain Khan, J. B. & O. R. S. June 1918 p, 234.)

2 *Indian Painting under the Moguls* by Percy Brown, p. 104 ; *see* also p. 193.

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to fix the beginning of the Patna School or Qalam as we now know it.

The names of these artist emigré's from Murshidabad are difficult to trace. Rai Ishwari Prasad does not remember even the name of his maternal ancestor who removed to Patna and whose son was Fakir Chand ; but it seems that an early artist of repute, who came probably later from Benares, was one Sewak Ram, who had been a retained artist in the Darbar of the then Maharaja of Benares and migrated to Patna on his patron's death.

There may of course have been stray artists working in Azimabad, the City's name in Mogul days, towards the end of the 18th Century—for Azimabad was the seat of a Subedar or Governor under the Grand Moguls and there is every reason to believe that Governors followed the fashion set by their Emperors and maintained artists at their Provincial Courts. Descendants of those artists may well have survived into the 19th Century, eking out a precarious existence by practising their Art. If there were any such indigenous artists when Ishwari Prasad's ancestors removed to Patna, their works are unknown and not one of their names has survived even by verbal tradition.

In this connection Mr. Shere, the Curator of the Patna Museum, has shown the writer a painting very reminiscent of the Patna School in technique. It depicts a woman apparently after her bath standing on a low wooden platform, drying her hair. She

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is dressed in a very transparent Muslin skirt which is held in place by a girdle below the breasts. The form and figure are completely visible through the diaphanous drapery. Incidentally, this is a frequent subject in Mogul and Rajput painting. The figure is well drawn but the face may have been more pleasing. The most pleasing part of the whole picture, however, is the river scene *en vignette* on one side of the picture, with its little boats and figures, and cottages on the further bank. The interest of this little item is that we definitely know it was painted by an artist named Mir Abbas Ali who died at the ripe old age of 95 about 40 years ago, *i. e.* in 1903. The picture is in the possession of Mr. Hassan Ahmad Khan, Rais and Zemindar of Islampur in the district of Patna, not very far from Patna City itself. The artist Mir Abbas Ali was a retained artist in the employ of Mr. Hassan Ahmad Khan's grandfather, Chaudhuri Zahurul Huq Sahab of Islampur, who died about 60 years ago, *i. e.* 1883. The tradition is that Mir Abbas Ali came from Lucknow and, having regard to the dates mentioned above, this picture may well have been painted in the second half of the 19th Century. The conclusion from all this is that apart from the artists established at Patna City in the 19th Century there were at the same time other artists plying their profession in the district itself.

Professor Ishwari Prasad's information is that Sewak Ram had no established atelier or studio at Patna at which he taught or trained pupils, but it is more than probable that indigenous talent must

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have been attracted to this artist and been influenced by his style and technique. Unfortunately none of these artists signed their paintings throughout the 19th Century, so we have to rely entirely on attributions authenticated by old artists of the School and by information gleaned from surviving dependants of the patrons of these artists.

The earliest example, attributed to Sewak Ram, is to be seen in *Plate 5*—in which he probably depicted two of his patrons on a caparisoned elephant wending their way through Patna City, possibly to pay an official visit. It is rough in brush work and hard in colour and of no great merit, and it is reproduced only because it is the earliest example extant with a fairly authenticated attribution, though it is more typical of the Benares than the Patna School. An unusual feature of Sewak Ram's work was that he rarely used pencilling to delineate his figures before applying the brush ; he painted his figures with the brush straightaway, a technique known as Kajli seahi, requiring considerable skill in painting what are really " miniatures " as they are technically called. The smaller the dimensions of the picture, the more difficult is the required brush touch.

Fakir Chand's son was the talented Shiva Lal, "Shahi Musavvir," referred to above as the maternal grandfather of Ishwari Prasad. Shiva Lal had no son but a daughter Sona Bai who inherited her father's artistic gifts and transmitted them to her only child Ishwari.

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Shiva Lal was born at Patna and died in the family house at Lodikatra in Patna City in 1883 at a ripe old age, so he must have worked many years in Patna, at first under his father. Of him it is said that he opened a Studio or "Musavvirkhana" to which flocked pupils from Patna City, Benares, Allahabad, Lucknow and even Murshidabad (the late residence of the family). The artists of Delhi refused to be drawn into the orbit of the New School which at that time threatened to become an important rival. No example of Fakir Chand's work can be traced, but a fine example of Shiva Lal's work is seen in *Plate 6*—A Mahommedan wedding. The picture is painted with dignity and restraint.[1] Gone are the gorgeous colours, tesselated walls and floors and decorative surroundings of the Persian and Mogul Schools, which arrest the eye. Instead we have a softness of colouring and a simplicity of design which rest the eye. Gone are the often complicated architectural effects not only of the earlier Schools but also very frequently of the later Pahari and Kangra examples. The attitudinising figures and over crowding in so many paintings of the older Schools make way for simple and far more natural figures, perfectly drawn and proportioned, and, though the figures are numerous, so admirably grouped and posed that there is no sense of congestion. Each figure is alive and pleasing, each

1 First reproduced in the Indian Athenæum of August 1923, Vol. I, No. 23, Page 4. Oriental Art Treasures by J. N. Samaddar, B. A.

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woman is doing just what we may expect her to do, and looking as we may expect her to look at such a ceremony. Nothing is stereotyped, there is a flow of rhythmic action in the whole composition. For these reasons one must say it is the work of a master with an individualistic style and technique that command admiration, and in this instance the attribution is fortunately well authenticated.

Another artist of this family was Shiva Dayal Lal (the maternal uncle of Shiva Lal). It is not clear when and whence he came to Patna but he worked in Patna till his death about 1867 or 1870. Professor Ishwari Prasad attributes the painting Chauthari Ganga Puja in the Patna Museum (too damaged and faint to reproduce) to Shiva Dayal Lal, who was the master artist retained in the Durbar of Rai Sultan Bahadur, a Rais of Patna City, whose descendant presented it to the Museum. He also maintained a studio in which many pupils were trained.

At Patna this family of artists found patronage under Raja Jhau Lal[1] of Jhaugunj a quarter of Patna City named after the Raja, and later under Rai Sultan Bahadur, another cultured zemindar and Rais of Patna City descended from a cousin of Maharaja Shitab Rai, Deputy Governor of Bihar and Orissa under the Moguls. It is also said that the then Maharajas of Bettiah in North Bihar were

1. Jhau Lal was a minister of Asaf-ud-daula, Nawab of Oudh who reigned from 1775—1787. It is not known when Jhau Lal died. *Cf*: O'Malley's Patna Gazetteer 1907, p. 209.

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great patrons of these artists and in fact there is a collection of their work in possession of the Bettiah Estate now under the Court of Wards.

It is not clear whether Sewak Ram or any of the earlier artists was attached to the establishment of any great Rais, but Shiva Lal Saheb, "Shahi Musavvir", apparently refrained from becoming a retainer of any great house; he preferred to remain a free lance with his own "Musavvir-Khana" (Studio) painting on commissions from wealthy patrons and training his pupils. Some of the latter undoubtedly gravitated into the establishments of patrons such as the Jhaugunj Raja and Rai Sultan Bahadur and became retained artists of their Durbars, as was the custom in the days of the Grand Mogul. One such was probably Mahadeva Lal of a Benares family of artists. He came to Patna as a lad of 16, having already received a grounding from his elder brother Bisheshwar Lal, an artist of repute. Here at Patna, Mahadeva Lal was introduced to Babu Punjab Rai, Diwan of Rai Durga Prasad Saheb, the heir of Maharaja Ramnarain of Patna. This Rais took a fancy to the youthful Mahadeva and entertained him as an artist of his Durbar. On the death of Shiva Dayal Lal referred to above, his widow adopted Mahadeva. He lived and worked in Patna City till his death in 1943 at the ripe age of 90, but in his later years blindness overtook him and he became sadly impoverished. An example of work attributed to Mahadeva Lal will be seen in "Ragini Gandhari" (*Plate 7*). In the writer's early collecting days he

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frequently employed Mahadeva Lal to repair some of his damaged acquisitions and one winter sent him touring in Northern India in quest of good paintings. He was not very successful in this quest but did acquire a very fine but alas ! damaged example of the early Kangra School depicting the scene known as Kalya Nag, *i. e.* Sri Krishna subduing the river dragon while the latter's mermaid wives beseech the God to spare his life. Incidentally, Babu Radha Mohan now Principal of the recently established Patna School of Art was a pupil of Mahadeva Lal, so the Patna School tradition of technique still survives, for here at Patna these 19th Century artists developed an individualistic style and technique very different as already pointed out from the somewhat stereotyped Mogul School with its attitudinising figures (due to the earlier Persian influence) and also different from the less formal Rajput School, making their own pigment and their own brushes as did their ancestors the Court painters of the spacious Mogul days, and in the earlier period making their own paper.

Unfortunately none of these 19th Century examples of the School are signed so far as we know, but Professor Ishwari Prasad is able to attribute our more important pictures to one or other of the limited number of the better known artists who later developed this School. As their numbers expanded, the rank and file, in order to earn a living, must have painted the numerous specimens that are extant of the multifarious scenes

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they daily witnessed of every day life in the City, artisans and craftsmen plying their trade, carpenters, weavers, blacksmiths, silversmiths (*Plate 8*), butchers, fisherwomen with baskets of their men's catch, even the humble dhobi or the toddy tapper, sadhus and ascetics, ekkas and palanquins and a hundred other subjects too numerous to mention. The Patna Museum possesses a considerable number of these slight coloured sketches of every day life of Patna folk, most of which are admirably drawn and life like representations. Rarely have these any landscape, foreground or background; they may be dubbed "pot boilers", which used to be sold at a rupee or so each and presumably were popular with the middle classes from whose descendants the writer has acquired many at quite modest prices. These are probably the examples which Mr. Percy Brown describes as " hard in feeling " but " quite good in technique"[1].

Others specialised in painting birds, not only the birds they saw around them but also rare birds, in the Aviaries of their patrons, for it was the fashion amongst the gentry in those days to keep such Aviaries. These birds too are admirably drawn and very delicately painted, but with rare exceptions there is no foliage, no environment to complete a picture, such as we find in the beautiful bird pictures of Mansur, the Master Court painter to Akbar and after him to Jehangir, mentioned especially in the Jehangirnama. In (*Plate 9*) we have

1. Indian Painting under the Moguls, p. 193.

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one of the best examples of a bird by Gursahay Lal of the Patna School. The names of the artists who were painting these birds were Gursahay Lal who died about 1865, Bani Lal, Sheogovind Lal and one Bahadur Lal of Arrah, all of whom lived to a good old age and died in the last decade of the 19th Century.

The dove of Bihar known as pandook (*Plate 10*) by Bahadur Lal of Arrah is so elegantly drawn that we cannot refrain from reproducing it. Moreover its pale grey plumage flushed with pale rose is so delicately painted that we regret it is not possible to reproduce this example in colour, owing to the delay and expense involved.

Incidentally there appears to have been a branch of the Patna School working at Arrah (of Mutiny fame), some of whom painted the homely everyday scenes on mica. Examples of these are to be found at the Patna Museum, the Patna School of Art and in the writer's and other private collections. Only the finest translucent mica was used by these artists, the mica lending brilliance to the pigment.

Others again, including Bahadur Lal, specialised on flower painting. An Album of such flower pictures was recently presented to the Patna Museum by Rai Shyam Bahadur, grandson of Rai Sultan Bahadur, and a Rais of Patna City. Mostly, they are just sprays of different flowers, well executed but appearing rather cold and naked without plant or vase or bouquet of well blended flowers. They are obviously very late 19th Century work. Professor Ishwari Prasad attributes them to Bahadur Lal of Patna who was in the

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service of Rai Sultan Bahadur and died at the end of the last Century.

Another good artist was Gopal Lal, who worked in Shiva Lal's studio, as he and Shiva Lal had married two sisters, and who eventually died at Calcutta about 1911. Two pictures attributed to him by Professor Ishwari Prasad are in the Museum—the Holi Festival and Hutri Festival on Diwali Day (*Plate 11*). In the latter we have again a typical Patna Qalam picture of good technique. It is drawn and coloured with dignified restraint, though not so important or fine an example as Plate 6. It was very generously presented to the Museum by Messrs. Dabur of Deoghar in the district of Dumka, Santal Parganas, through the good offices of Mr. W. G. Archer, now Deputy Commissioner of Dumka and a Member of the Managing Committee of the Patna Museum. Along with this picture, was presented an Album dated 1825 containing a miscellaneous collection of sketches of scenes from everyday life, similar to the pot boilers of the Patna School referred to above. From the human types depicted as well as from their clothing and head gear, it is clear that these slight painted sketches were done in Western and Southern India. There is not a single example of the Patna School in this Album so the date on the Album will not assist us to fix the dates of our Patna sketches. All we can infer is that sometime before 1825 such work was being done in various parts of India and had a popular market.

In Revels in the Harem (*Plate 12*) we have an unusual example of the School by Jamuna Prasad

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who was in the service of Rai Sultan Bahadur, one of whose descendants generously presented this painting to the Patna Museum through Khan Saheb S. A. A. Rizavi, Magistrate of Patna City. Jamuna Prasad died about 50 years ago and as this picture is said to have been painted towards the end of his life, it may be placed somewhere in the last quarter of the 19th Century. It is unusual in the abandon displayed, suitable of course to the subject; the colours are also brighter and more vivid than typical of the School. The moulding of the figures is good and an unconventional scene has been treated with a vigour which may easily have degenerated into coarseness in less skilled hands.

Bani Lal, one of the artists mentioned above as painting birds, was a pupil of Shiva Lal our Shahi Musavvir. A good example of his general work (*Plate 13*) is in the Museum. The elephant is finally drawn and the scene is one familiar to residents of Patna. It may be observed that Indian artists usually excel in drawing the bulky elephant with its ponderous movements, following nature strictly and avoiding convention such as we frequently find them adopting in their drawings of horses and dogs. This picture is said to have been painted in the last quarter of the 19th Century. Another example by this excellent artist is to be seen in the midday rest (*Plate 14*) in which the drawing is good, the colours subdued and reminiscent of those in the Mohomedan marriage by Shiva Lal (whose pupil was Bani Lal) The warm atmosphere of the desert is also well reproduced. There is reliable evidence

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that this picture was painted shortly after the Mutiny, probably about 1858.

There have also been two lady artists in the family : Shiva Lal Saheb's sister Daksho Bibi and the Professor's mother, the lady Sona Bai, both of whom indulged their talent as a pleasant diversion.

As Shiva Lal Saheb preferred to remain a free lance, he was able to pay frequent visits to Calcutta from his Patna house and the then young Ishwari frequently accompanied him on these trips. In Calcutta, Shiva Lal must have come into contact with European pictorial Art which would account for the European influence which steadily crept into Patna work, though Ishwari Prasad attributes the European influence largely to the patronage of certain distinguished British officials of those days serving at Patna. He says that Tayler, Commissioner of Patna, of Mutiny fame, and Lyall and D'Oyly[1]

1 Tayler (*sic*) was Commissioner of Patna from 1855 to 1857. Dr. Lyell (*sic*), P. A., acted as Opium Agent for only 4 days from 30-6-57 to 3-7-57.

W. H. D'Oyly who succeeded to a Baronetcy after retirement was Opium Agent of Bihar in 1878 and again in 1885-86.

See "Appointments in Bengal and their holders from about 1850 to 1906". Bengal Secretariat Publication.

It was on the last of these 4 days, *i. e.* on 3rd July that Dr. Lyall was shot by rioters in Patna City. He gallantly rode out from the Opium Factory (now the Government Printing Press) in advance of Rattray's Sikhs thinking his presence would overawe the rioters who were rushing to attack the Roman Catholic Church in the City. As he approached them, several shots were fired and he fell mortally wounded (O'Malley's District Gazetteer of Patna p. 43).

Lyall's grave is in the old Cemetery near the Roman Catholic Convent at Bankipore.

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in turn patronised these Patna artists, giving them and procuring for them commissions to paint more particularly miniature portraits from life in the style so fashionable in England since the days of Cosway and John Smart. John Smart, probably the finest English miniaturist, who unlike Cosway refused to flatter his sitters, actually visited India in the early 19th Century, and painted many known portratis invariably initialled "*J.S.*" with an "*I*" beneath to indicate it was painted in India. There is no doubt that some of these Patna artists soon attained considerable skill in painting these portrait miniatures from life, as one occasionally picks up in Bihar excellent examples on ivory or even on paper, the subjects being British men and ladies dressed in the costume of the period or military officers in full uniform. There are also extant many portraits on ivory of Indian gentlemen of the upper classes in their national costumes and of Indian ladies. As in those days the Purdah was strictly observed by ladies of the upper classes, both Hindu and Mahomedan, these latter portraits may be of famous dancing girls or of mistresses maintained by the Patna gentry. Some of these are very beautiful both as to the subject and the execution, and many shew with charming effect, through an open window behind the lady, glimpses of the Ganges and its North bank in the background. As so many of the gentry of Patna had their residences on the River bank, one may surmise that these portraits undoubtedly from life were actually painted in rooms or terraces overlooking the Ganges. There are several good examples of these miniature

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portraits at the Patna Museum and in the writer's collection.

A very pleasing though unfortunately unfinished portrait of an Indian lady may be seen in *Plate 15* definitely attributed by Professor Ishwari Prasad to his maternal uncle Shiva Lal, our "Shahi Musavvir"; and as this miniature has always been in possession of Ishwari Prasad till it was acquired by the writer, one may accept the attribution as authentic. Moreover it is so good in quality that it may well have been the work of Shiva Lal, the most distinguished of the artists of the Patna School in the 19th Century. The face alone has been painted but that has been painted with great delicacy; the artist has skilfully used the ivory itself to supply the high lights by adding the faintest touches of colour. Finally the expressive eyes and the warm full lips were surely the work of a masterhand. The lady's drapery covering the form are finely outlined in graceful curves and folds. A thousand pities that this little masterpiece of miniature portrait work on ivory was never completed! On the other hand one may be thankful that a less skilled hand did not attempt to complete the piece. This excellent artist died in the family house at Lodikatra, Patna City, at a ripe old age in 1883.

In the middle of the 19th Century, a painter of great repute in this line of miniature portraits was one Jairam Das, whose work was largely influenced by the English style and technique.

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A fine example attributed to him is the European lady with brown curls, a red décolleté frock and a string of pearls round her neck (*Plate 16*). In *Plate 17* we have an attractiue portrait of an Indian lady in pale blue Dopatta (Orhna) with embroidered border in yellow, a red lahnga or pyjama. Seated on her lap is a white dog, while on her shoulder is a tame squirrel. The Indian lady in *Plate 18* is another good example in which also the colours are harmoniously blended. She wears a pale green jacket under a diaphanous white sari with an embroidered border in yellow and red. The palm leaf fan is painted red with a yellow border. These latter two portraits may be by Shiva Lal or Jairam Das, the attributions being doubtful. No other portrait artist of repute is known.[1] In *Plate 19* we have a gentleman of the Victorian period with Dundreary whiskers dressed in a black coat with high open collar and black stock; while in *Plate 20*, unfortunately somewhat damaged, is depicted a high Military Officer heavily whiskered, wearing a black uniform with red and yellow collar and epaulettes. The identity of none of the Europeans protrayed is traceable.

It should be emphasised that these portraits drawn and painted from life are very different from the miniature portraits on ivory of Mogul

1. The Patna Museum is the fortunate possessor of these last three delightful miniature portraits painted from life. Vide Patna Museum Art Register Nos. 215, 208, and 205.

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Emperors, Empresses and Princes which for very many years have been reproduced by hand at Delhi, frequently with considerable skill and minute observation of detail, and a liberal use of gold. In the case of the males these reproductions may be slavish copies from old originals, but it can hardly be supposed that high born ladies of the Imperial family ever shewed themselves to artists. With very rare exceptions they observed strict purdah, so their portraits must be wholly drawn from imagination. These, Delhi miniatures, being copies, lack vitality and appear stiff and stilted. On the other hand, the portrait miniatures of the Patna School were all drawn and painted from life, enabling that subtle current of sympathy to flow between sitter and artist and thus inspire the skilled hand. Also, the lines are bolder, the brush work stronger than those in the meticulous style of the Delhi artists. Incidentally, no gold is used but a very pleasing yellow pigment closely imitating the colour of gold, both light or old gold as required. In fact this is the case not only in their miniature portraits, but also in their general work—rarely is actual gold used.

After the death of Shiva Lal, the Shahi Musavvir, in 1883, Ishwari took his wife and daughter to Jaura State in Central India, where his father was State Engineer. For four years they lingered there and then the father retired to Muttra accompanied by his son and the latter's family.

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At Muttra, Ishwari obtained a post as retained artist to Raja Lachuman Das Seth.

It seems that the death of Shiva Lal and the departure of Ishwari more or less coincided with the demise of various Indian patrons and the departure of European patrons of the dwindling group of Patna artists. The last of their known Indian patrons, Rai Sultan Bahadur died in 1892 leaving no male issue to carry on the tradition of encouragement. The result was that most of these artists began to scatter and, what is worse, give up their profession. Some took posts as draftsmen, some as tracers in Government Offices; some turned their artistic qualifications to designing borders on piece goods in various Companies. One Bahadur Lal of Patna seems to have been the only known artist who continued attached to Rai Sultan Bahadur's Durbar till that rais's death in 1892. Then he too removed to Calcutta and took a post as designer to the firm of Kar Tarak and Co. Ishwari himself worked at Muttra for some years and after his father's death, followed by the death of the Raja, his patron, he too moved on to Calcutta. In fact when the writer came to Patna in the closing years of the last century the only known artist still plying his trade against adverse circumstances was Mahadeva Lal, referred to earlier in this article. The times were bad, photography was displacing painting and portrait painting in particular, the work of the last survivors deteriorated and thus ended the Patna School of the 19th Century.

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Although not strictly pertinent to the title of this Article, it may be of interest to record the rest of Ishwari Prasad's own life story, for the writer looks upon him as the last well known master of the School. In 1904 he was first appointed a teacher in foliage at the Calcutta School of Art which had been opened in the last decade of the 19th Century and was then located in Bow Bazar with Jobin as its Principal. The School was later removed to Chowringhee next door to the Indian Museum when E. B. Havell (author of a well-known early work on Indian Paintings) became its Principal. Then followed Mr. Abanindra Nath Tagore, the master artist of the Bengal School, whose paintings are world famous. Later Mr. Percy Brown, whose work on Mogul Paintings is probably the best and most reliable on that subject, assumed the Principalship and for a period Ishwari Prasad acted as Vice-Principal.

Ishwari Prasad had 3 sons: Narain, Rameshwar and Mahabir, all artists. The most gifted of these was Rameshwar whom the writer discovered several years ago and who painted several excellent pictures for him on commission, before this talented young artist went to England on a State scholarship. There he qualified as an A. R. C. A., London, passing through the 4 years course at the South Kensington School of Art, after which he returned to India. Sad to relate, within a year of his return to his homeland this brilliant and promising young artist died. The writer has several examples of his early work, but after his return from England he was much occupied in

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mural painting for the late Maharajdhiraj of Burdwan. In the example *Plate 21*, this young artist gives us a pleasing combination of Persia and the Pahari School of India. The other son Mahabir has also inherited his father's gift as is evident from the charming study of a woman on a balcony (*Plate 22*). The colours are soft and well blended and the composition altogether harmonious.

It may also be useful to record some information about the pigment used by the master artists of this School. The writer has gleaned the following information regarding the manufacture of their colours :—

Gulabi (various shades of red from pink to carmine)—was prepared from shellac.

Safaida (white)—from a particular kind of earth from Kashghar and not from misshaped or seed pearls, as the writer was told by descendants of Mogul artists in Kashmir.

Seahi (black)—from burnt ivory or from the burnt wick of a chiragh, *i. e.* the homely earthenware shallow vessel which holds the oil and provides the cottage light.

Sayravan (yellow)—from gamboge or a yellow gum resin taken off the gum tree.

Neel (blue)—from indigo.

Shanjarf or vermilion—from cinnabar or an ore of mercury from China.

Magenta—from the roots of a tree.

Sabz (green)—from a mixture of gamboge and neel (blue).

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Lajvard—from lapis lazuli.

Geru (Indian brickred)—from red earth found near Cawnpore.

Abrang (pale brownish yellow)—from yellow ochre found near Muttra.

Gold pigment is prepared from gold leaf beaten fine, first mixed with honey, then a little water added; the mixture is well stirred and then allowed to settle; the water is then drained and the gold remains as a powdery sediment. This is then mixed with gum arabic obtained from the acacia plant and the gold paint is then ready to be applied with a brush.

Silver—the same process is used.

In fact gum arabic is added to all these pigments before use.

The artists of Kashmir told the writer of a tradition that the blood of animals and of certain birds was used in the manufacture of various shades of red, but Professor Ishwari Prasad stoutly contradicts this assertion, pointing out that all blood turns into a blackish colour after exposure to the air.

I doubt if many of the artists painting in India to-day take the trouble to manufacture their own pigments; the processes involve too much time and labour and money. It was for this reason that the late Sir John Woodroffe, Judge of the Calcutta High Court, a Sanskrit scholar deeply interested in the culture, the religion and the arts of India, commissioned Professor Ishwari Prasad to make a complete set of paints. When this was done, Sir John

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Woodroffe who was also closely associated with the Oriental Art School in Calcutta distributed the pigments amongst his friends, presumably to encourage the young artists of Bengal to make their own paints.

As regards brushes, the Professor says that for very fine work they used a brush made from the tails of squirrels. For bolder and broader work they used hair from the tail of a goat or from the neck of a hog or the neck of a buffalo. All these hairs except those of the scquirrel were first softened by being boiled. Incidentally, the writer was told in Kashmir that many of the Court painters used camel hair brushes for fine work and these brushes were often composed of a single hair of the camel to paint in human hair. This is not unlikely because when one examines a Mogul portrait through a strong magnifying glass one is surprised to find the delicacy with which each hair of the subject's head is delineated.

Then as to their paper : In the early days at Patna these artists made their own paper by hand from cotton (called tulat) or rags ; or they used paper prepared by hand in Nepal from jute or bamboo saplings (called bansaha). In the latter half of the 11th Century they began to use drawing paper from Europe.

Finally, they never seem to have given their finished work a polish by gentle rubbing with a smooth piece of agate or ivory, as was the general practice in the Mogul School and even in the Pahari Schools of the late 18th and early 19th Centuries.

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In fact the practice persisted in Kangra, Chamba and Garhwal into our times and probably is still in vogue in most of the submontane regions which turn out the numerous mythological paintings on the market.

Before closing this Article, I must express my indebtedness to Mr. S. A. Shere, M. A., Curator, Patna Museum, who has been most helpful in checking up facts from local sources in Patna City, as also in lending me the services of Babu P. K. Rai Chowdry, the Photographer on the Museum staff, whose excellent prints have been reproduced in the Plates.

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Plate 1

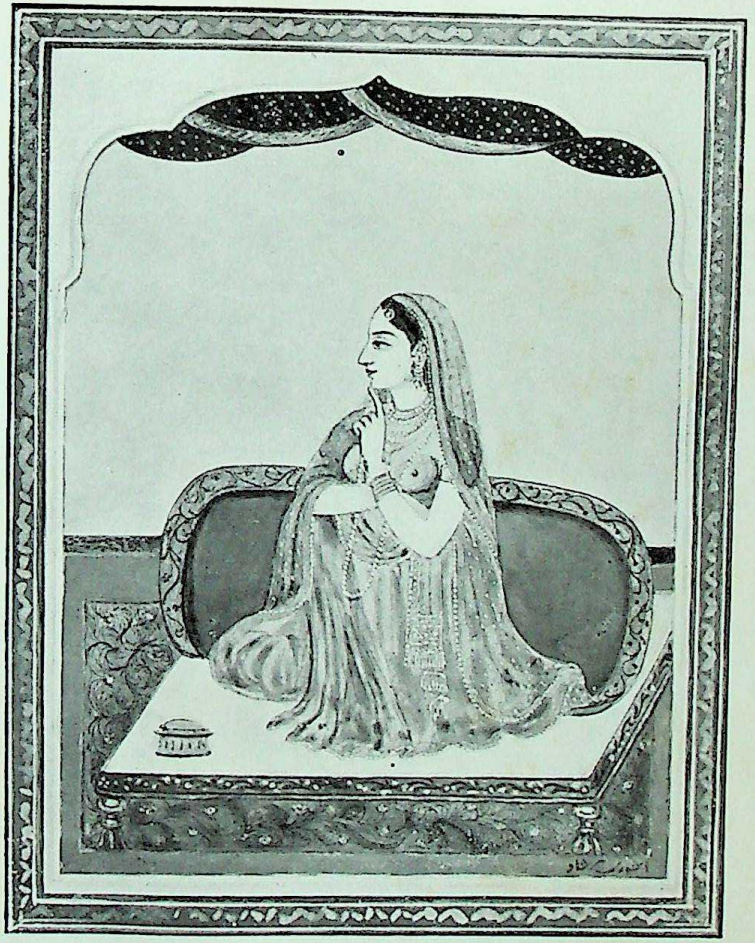

Plate 2

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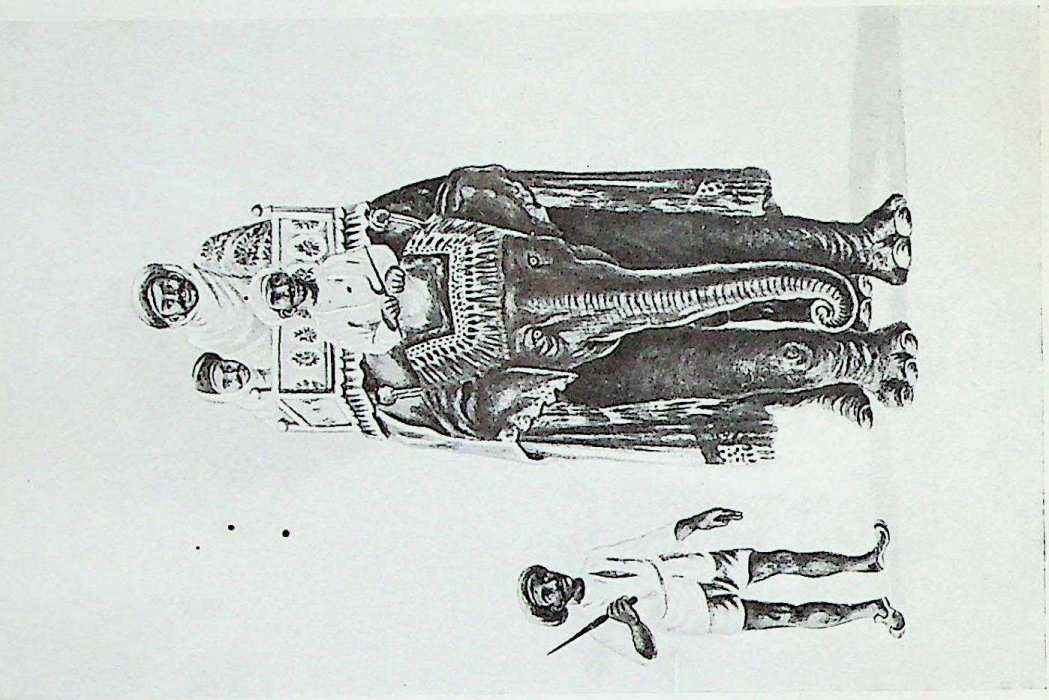

Plate 5.

Patna Museum
IBRS 1943

Plate 3.

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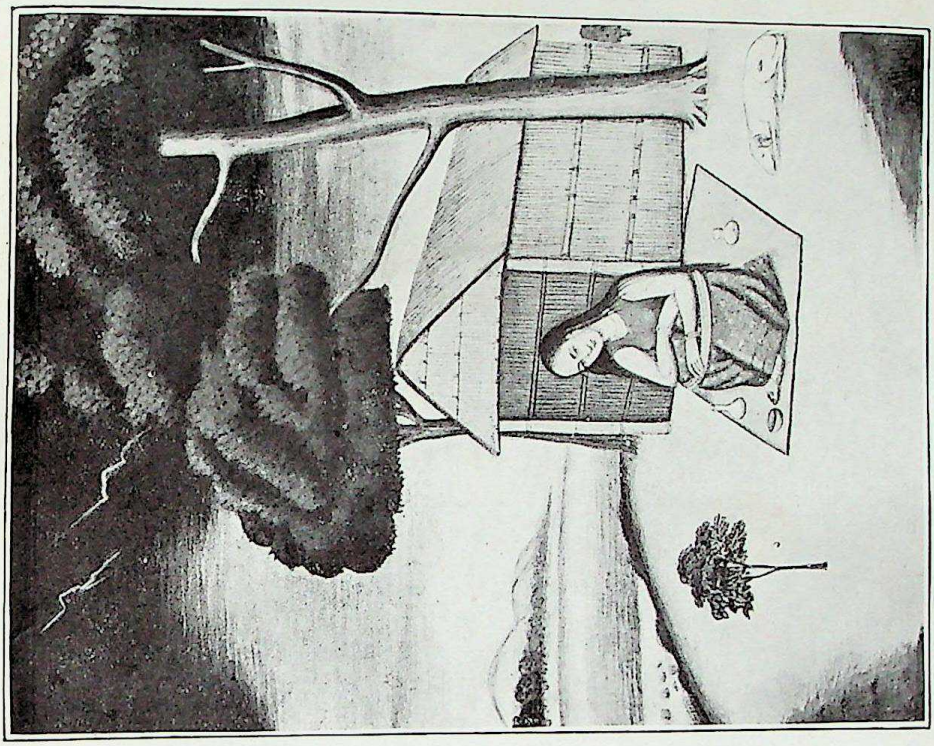

Plate 7. Patna Museum JBRS 1943

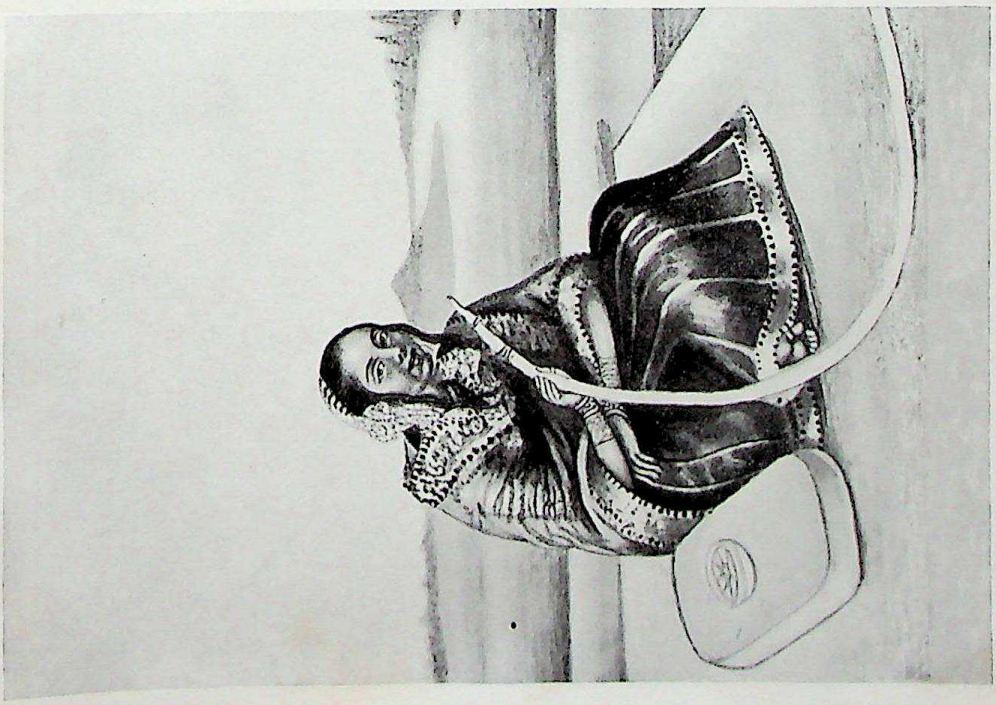

Plate 4.

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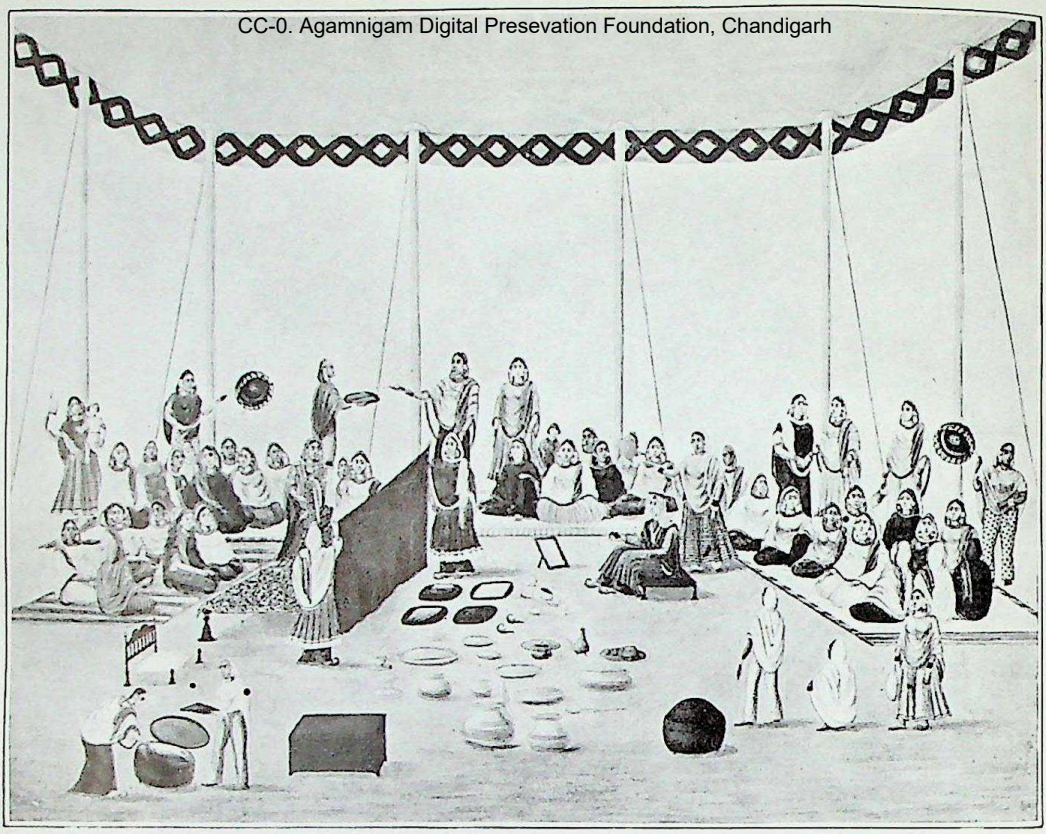

Plate 6 Writer's Collection

Plate 8 Writer's Collection

Plate 9. Writer's Collection

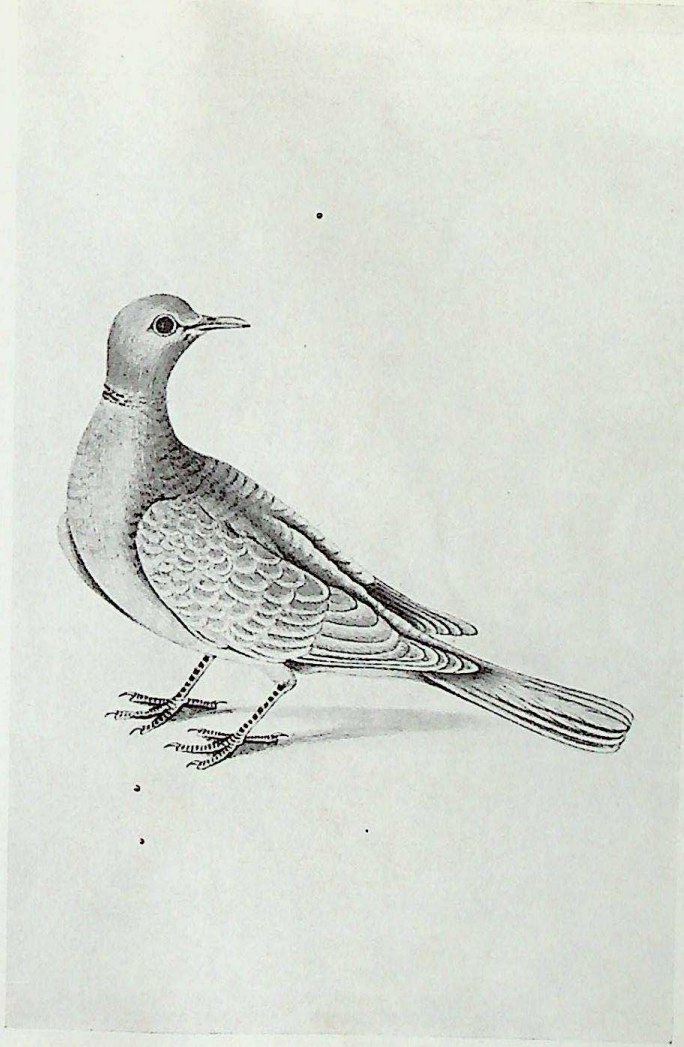

Plate 10 Writer's Collection

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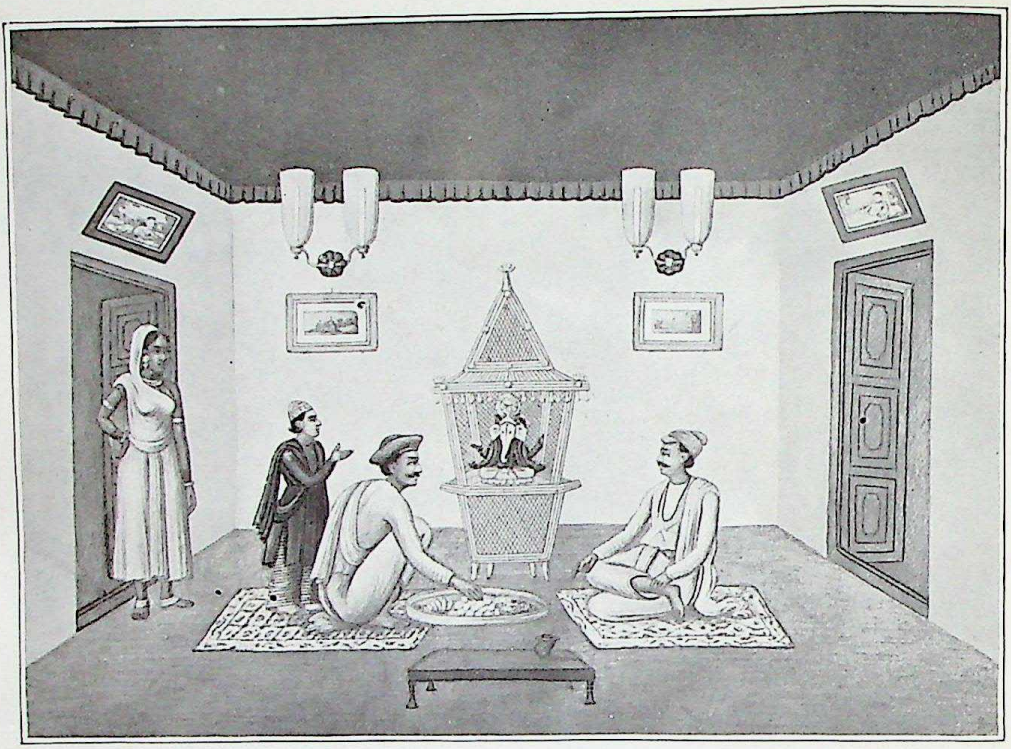

Plate 11. Patna Museum

Plate 12. Patna Museum

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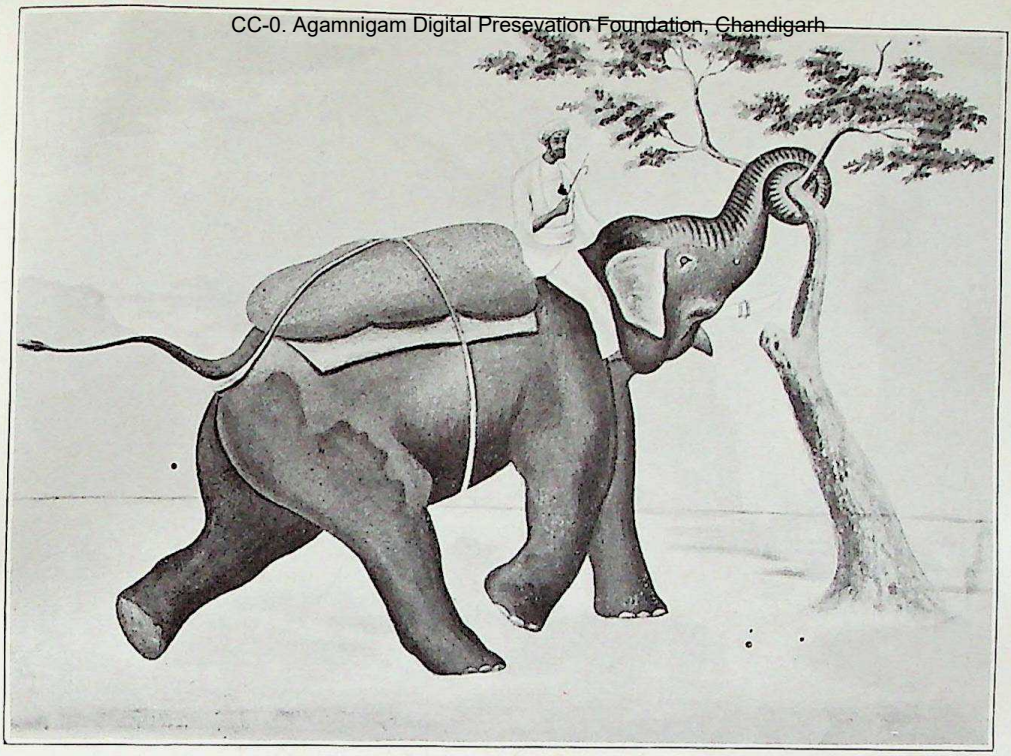

Plate 13. Patna Museum

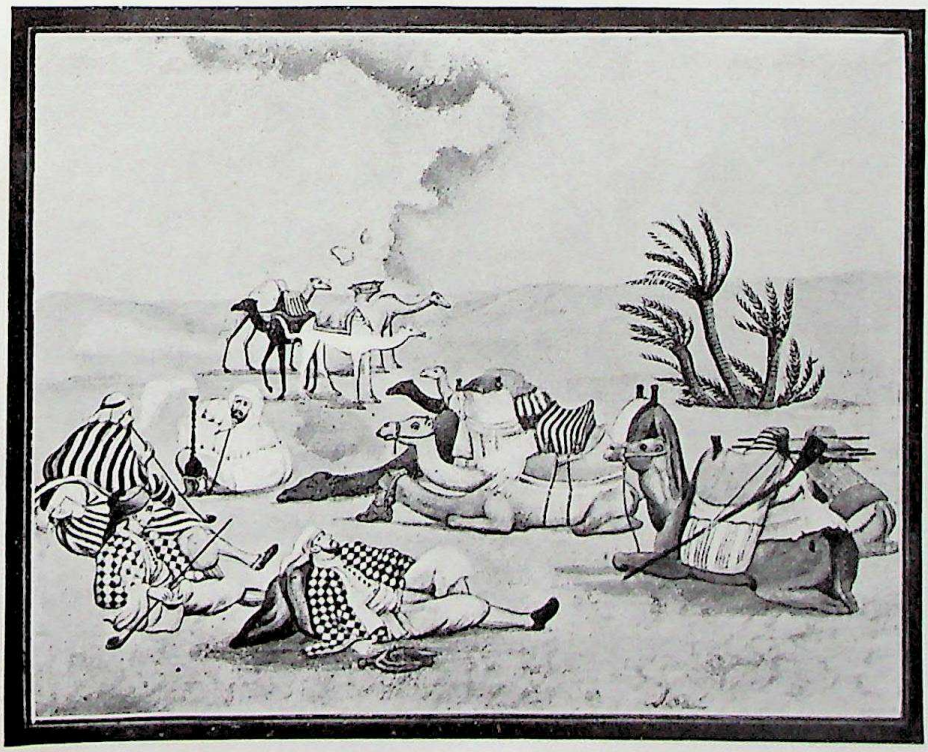

Plate 14. Writer's Collection
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Plate 21

Writer's Collection

Plate 22

Writer's Collection
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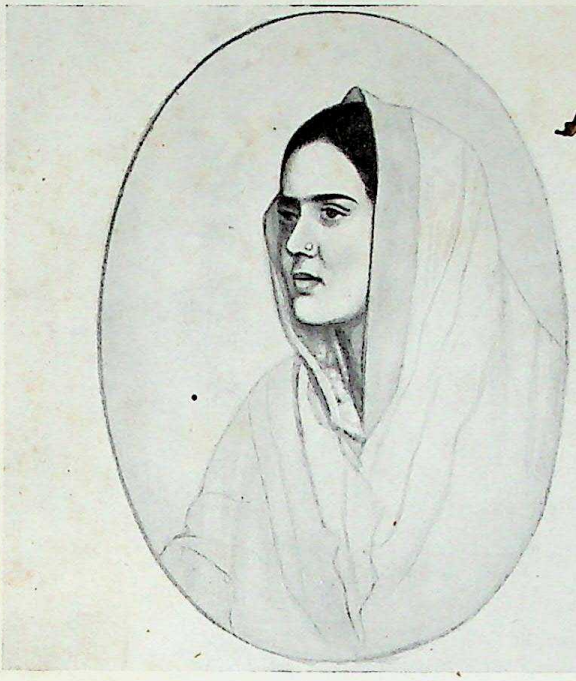

Plate 15 Writer's Collection

Plate 16 Patna Museum

Plate 18 Patna Museum

Plate 17 Patna Museum

Plate 20 Patna Museum

Plate 19 Writer's Collection

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Patna Law Press, Patna, Job No. 433/43—20.

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